

The Puget Sound Management Plan ~Update 2000~

Protecting Our Waters

Puget Sound is the second largest estuary in the nation. But more important to the people who live here is that it is home to a rich variety of natural resources that define our region, enhance our way of life and form a crucial sector of our economy.

The Puget Sound basin is a mosaic of habitats teeming with marine wildlife and plants. While much of the Sound is healthy, rapid growth and development in the region are stressing the system. A steady loss of habitat and alarming declines in the populations of some fish species are signs that the very best of Puget Sound is threatened.



The Puget Sound Water Quality Action Team is charged with protecting and enhancing the water quality and biological resources of Puget Sound (90.71 RCW). One way we carry out that charge is to keep current the state's comprehensive strategy, *The Puget Sound Water Quality Management Plan*. The plan guides the efforts of state and federal agencies and local and tribal governments to address the difficult water quality issues facing our region.

Why Do We Need to Update the Management Plan?

The Puget Sound basin is home to over 3.8 million people—two-thirds of Washington State's population. And the region's population is expected to exceed four million people in the next twenty years—a 30 percent increase.



Population growth threatens Puget Sound's health in a number of ways, causing:

- Direct loss and alteration of habitat at development sites.
- Habitat damage from high stormwater runoff.
- Low stream flows from reduced aquifer recharge.
- More toxic runoff from added vehicles on the road.
- Greater demands for on-site sewage treatment in marginal locations.
- Increased runoff of herbicides, pesticides and fertilizers from lawns.
- Increases in other sources of nonpoint pollution.

Chinook salmon, Hood Canal summer chum and bull trout species are listed as threatened under the federal Endangered Species Act and a number of other local marine fish are being evaluated for listing. The stormwater, habitat and wetlands programs of the Puget Sound Management Plan are critical to protection and restoration of the health of the Sound. The state's salmon strategy calls on the Action Team to enhance the plan's stormwater program. Habitat and wetlands programs in the plan also need review to ensure they are addressing critical issues appropriately.

The international boundary between the U.S. and Canada cuts through the middle of the Puget Sound/Georgia Basin ecosystem. The Action Team has worked to promote coordinated management and an open exchange of information across the border to ensure that water quality and resources are protected and restored to the benefit of both Washington and British Columbia. A new program will be added to the management plan to address this work.

Finally, the introduction of aquatic nuisance species—non-native species that can cause significant environmental and economic damage—is a significant threat. The updated management plan will speak to this important issue as well.

To Update the Plan We Will:

- Amend three programs: Fish and Wildlife Habitat Protection; Stormwater and Combined Sewer Overflows; and Wetlands Protection.
- Add two new programs to address aquatic nuisance species and transboundary work with British Columbia.
- Edit the entire plan to make sure that the language is consistent and clear.

The Update Process

We are meeting with a variety of people around the Sound—the agricultural community, builders, developers, environmental advocates, local governments, state and federal agencies and tribal governments—to discuss ideas for updating the management plan. Using input from these meetings, we'll develop a draft plan in the spring of 2000, and seek public comments during the summer. By the fall of 2000, the revised management plan will be complete.

The Work Plan: Making the Management Plan Happen

Every two years, the Action Team develops a work plan to describe what must be done to improve and maintain Puget Sound's health during the next biennium. We use the management plan's long term goals for the restoration and protection of the Sound as a guide to help us determine actions to include in each work plan. We also consider problems and priorities identified in local plans. The work plan, along with a budget designed to fund state agency actions described in it, is submitted to the state legislature. Once the work plan and budget are approved by the governor and the state legislature, the Action Team oversees implementation and coordination of work plan activities with state agencies, tribal and local governments and other entities. The 1999-2001 work plan is available on our website. In winter 2000, we'll begin laying the groundwork for the next work plan.

For more information, check out the complete text of the Puget Sound Plan, additional fact sheets about the update process, and information about the Action Team at www.wa.gov/puget_sound or call the Action Team at (360) 407-7300 or 1 (800) 54-SOUND. If you need these materials in an alternative format, call our TDD number 1 (800) 833-6388.